Synopsis

On

Relationship between Employee Related Variables and Customer Satisfaction: A Study of Select Retail Stores in India

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I. TOPIC OF RESEARCH

Relationship between Employee Related Variables and Customer Satisfaction: A Study of Select Retail Stores in India.

II. INTRODUCTION

In today's environment retailing in the new millennium stands as an exhilarating, multifaceted and significant sector of business in most developed as well as emerging economies. Indian retail industry is one of the most dynamic and fast-paced industries of the economy that includes individuals and companies in the selling of finished goods to ultimate consumers (Hisam *et al*., 2016). It accounts for over 10% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and around 8% of the employment ((IRIR, 2020). Indian retail market positioned the third largest in Asia and fourth largest in the world and also expected to grow US$1.2 trillion by 2021 and set to cross US$1.75 trillion by 2026, while domestic retail sales are expected to grow at a CAGR of 10.8 percent between 2017-18 and 2021-22 (Kapuria & Nalawade, 2021). India is the world's fifth largest global destination in the retail space (IBEF, 2021) and ranked, 63 in World Bank's Doing Business 2020 and 73 in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's Business-to-Consumer (B2C) E-commerce Index 2019.Expected total consumption expenditure reached in retail industry is nearly US$ 3,600 billion in 2020 (IRIR, 2020).

Indian retail industry can be classified into unorganised and organised sector. Unorganised retail is the traditional format which includes local kirana shops, hand cart, paan/beedi shops and vendors etc (Hussain & Mohideen, 2016) whereas Organised retail refers to the trading activities that are undertaken by the licensed retailer (registered under the income tax, sales tax etc). It is also observed that near

about 75% shares are hold by the traditional retail sector and 18% are held by organised retail sector and 7% hold by the e-commerce. Now consumer attention has moved away from traditional market to new shopping format such as superstore, malls, city centre and hypermarkets (Belwal & Belwal, 2017). Now traditional customers have shown a clear preference for new retail format with hypermarket that takes a prominent position in the market. The term hypermarket refers to a modern retailing store that enables customers to purchase most of their basic needs (Ghaffarkadhim, Harun & Othman, 2019).Hypermarket is the large self service outlet (Hussain & Mohideen, 2016) that combines a departmental store and supermarket and offering the variety of products such as appliances, groceries and clothing etc. The main motive of hypermarket is to offer a one stop shopping experience to the customers. It basically focuses on high volume, low margin sales and having the more than 20000 different brands in a single time. It also cover the area of 5000 to 15000 square meters.

Retailer in the 20th century is mainly focussed on providing the right product at right price with a right location. But in the 21st century the things have been changed and retailing has become important these days in which all the activities will revolve around the customers as customer is the king of market. Customer contact employees of a service company who have direct contact with customers are considered critical members of the workforce (Dastyari & Shahabi, 2014). Attitude of the employees and the way they treat customers, have great influence on customer satisfaction and services quality. So in addition, to define attitude and behaviour, commitment, empowerment and OCB could be an important factor to determine service quality and customer satisfaction. Present study mainly focuses on both the variables that are related to the employees as well as customers. Most of the retail services are characterised by consumers interacting with customer contact employees. So this study seeks to evaluate the relationship between the following variables: employee commitment, employee empowerment, organisational citizenship behaviour, perceived service quality and customer satisfaction in retail stores.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The diversification of store formats run by the retail brands is one of the most notable outcomes of the intense rivalry that has characterised the retail sector over the years.

Supermarkets expansion was accompanied by emergence of self service based retail model such as hypermarket. Hypermarkets typically offer wider shopping surfaces and superior volumes of product variety. In hypermarkets large number of customer contact employees is required to maintain the relationship with the customers. Prior research has tended to concentrate on corporate culture or service excellence quality, as well as their relationship with employees. But now relationship among employees and customers plays a significant role in the retail sector. Research study conducted in this field agree that employee commitment, employee empowerment and employee organisational citizenship behaviour in the critical moments of interaction with customers have a significant effect on customers perception of the quality of service delivery.

To understand this relationship present study have been reviewed more than 50 research papers from the various journals and found that employee empowerment and employee commitment positively affects employee organisational citizenship behaviour and this behaviour helps in changing the perception of customers towards the service quality which leads to the customer satisfaction. The present research focus on these variables.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is an emotional affection and identification with an organization's objectives, standards and habits (Anderson & Martin, 1995). Employees that are committed are mentally and expressively involved in the organizations, committed themselves to provide excellent service for the organization and are less likely to relinquish the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Chen, 2007; He *et al*., 2011). Employee commitment is an attitude that reflects employee's loyalty towards their organization. When the employees are more satisfied with their work then it leads to commitment and loyalty. Mowday *et al*., (1979) described the three dimensions of employee commitment: "(a) a strong confidence in and acceptance of the organization's objectives and goals; (b) a readiness to exercise significant effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong willingness to maintain membership in the organization".

On the basis of above definition of Meyer & Allen (1991) there are three dimensions of employee commitment namely affective commitment, continuance commitment

and normative commitment. Affective commitment is an employee emotional affection towards their organization because they want to stay with their own willingness. Continuance commitment is the degree to which employee believe that leaving the organisation would be costly for him. This includes job contracts or arrangements thatmay cause penalties for leaving a job. This viewpoint of continuance commitment originated from Becker's (1960) ''side-bets'' theory in which he defined commitment as "consistent lines of activity". Employee will have a sense of loss when they cannot continue their activities with the organisation. This component of commitment has been called exchange oriented commitment or calculative commitment (Kidron, 1978), Due to the exchange nature of continuous commitment (Stevens *et al.,* 1978). Finally, normative commitment implies the sense in which employee feel obligated towards the organisation and thought that staying is the right things to do (Lee &Chen, 2013).

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

In the early 1980, the term organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is given by Katz (1964), category of extra role behaviour (Batmen & organ, 1983).OCB defined the behaviour of an employee which is not a part of formal reward system, it is also related to promotion of competent and helpful functioning of the organization (Organ, 1997). Employees' extra-role behaviour is the optional performance that goes ahead of existing role expectations (Morrison, 1996), also known as OCB (Organ *et al*., 2005; Podsakoff *et al*., 2009). From the customer's viewpoint, the OCB of customer contactemployeesis performed beyond the needs of their role in the organisation, and that is not recognised by the formal reward system in the organisation (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Fernández-Sabiote & Roman, 2005).

Organ (1988) discussed five dimensions of OCB which will become the bases for other dimensions that will be created in the future: altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and civic virtue. Altruism is the ability of an employee to help their co-workers which helps the organisation in reducing the cost of supervision, training and management. Courtesy is basically a behaviour in which focal point of an employee is to prevent the problems and take precautionary steps so as to lessen the effect of the problem in future (Organ, 1988). Conscientiousness refers to the dedication of an employee towards their work which does not related

with the formal reward system of an organisation i.e. working long hours. It is also related to employee politics that are takes place in the organisation. Sportsmanship refers to the capability of an employee to tolerate less than ideal organisational situation without give up their personal interest. Civic virtue is the contribution of employees in political life of an organisation and supports its organizational functions (Ocampo *et al.,* 2018).

Employee Empowerment

Empowerment is an instrument which take full advantage of managerial change and performance by removing the "powerlessness" and by building employees more engaged in their workplace (zhang *et al*.,2019), it is also an "increased intrinsic task motivation"(Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It is just a responsibility that is shared by employees and mangers equally that results in maximising the employee contribution towards the organisation's success. Empowerment concept are defined in two distinctive approaches one is structural approach (Kanter,1983 & 1987) and another is psychological approach (Spreitzer, 1995; Kassim *et al.*, 2012).Structural empowerment refers to practices, policies and organizational structures that provide autonomy to the employee in decision making and also affects their work, which is related with the concept of power sharing between employers and their subordinates. Structural empowerment is the use of management policies and practices which aimed to deliver authority (participative organisational climate), power (access to information and organisational resources) and control (training and development) (Kazlauskaite *et al.*, 2012; Kassim *et al.*, 2012). Psychological approach emphasizes the degree of control over their activity that individual employees observe.

Spreitzer (1995) defined four dimensions of psychological empowerment namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Meaning may be defined as a personal connection to one's work goals and work is according to the employee attitudes, values and belief. Competence is an employee confidence in his ability to carry out professional job activities and his individual ability to implement task and duties professionally based on skills, experience and skills. Self determination is an individual belief to control and independence in performing tasks. Employees performed their tasks efficiently and also know how to behave in various situations. Impact is the ability of employee to make a difference in their organisation, achieve

work goals i.e. high performance. Employee belief that their behaviour can achieve organisational goals.

Perceived Service Quality

Perceived service quality is the outcome of an evaluation process, where the consumer compares his expectations with the service he perceives and he has received (Gronroos, 1984). Furthermore, Parasuraman *et al.,* (1988) defined service quality as "the overall evaluation of a specific service firm that results from comparing that firm's performance with the customers' general expectations of how firms in that industry should perform". Parasuraman *et al.,* (1988) defined the ten distinct dimension of measuring service quality but later in 1991 they can refined into five dimension Reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance (communication, competence, credibility, courtesy and security) and empathy. Reliability is the capacity to fulfil what was promised accurately. Responsiveness is the skill of an employee to attend the customers and provide them the service rapidly and also capturing the concept of flexibility and ability to adapt to the needs of the consumers. Tangibles are the physical aspect of what is provided to customers. Assurance is the ability of the company to encourage belief and confidence in the service delivery. Empathy is the process of attending the customers individually (Zeithaml & Bitner)

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction today plays an important role in an organisation performance because it directly impacts the company's potential earning (Proenca *et al*., 2017).Basically Satisfaction is an measurement of the feature of the product or service, which provides the level of consumer satisfaction with regard to the fulfilment of consumer needs and consumer responses regarding the fulfilment of needs. The difference between the customer expectation prior to purchase and their experience for the same service determines the customer satisfaction (Mahfooz, 2014). Customer satisfaction is related to attribute specific and overall performance. It is attribute specific when it relates to the specific product and service. On the other hand customer satisfaction is related with the overall performance of the product and service or the overall performance of a product and service provider (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Satisfaction is also having the two perspective as transactional or cumulative (Nimako, 2012). When satisfaction is based on one single transaction and

has specific post purchase evaluative judgement is called transactional satisfaction (Oliver, 1980). On the other hand when satisfaction is conceptualised as an overall customer evaluation of a product or service based on purchase and consumption experience over a period of time is called cumulative satisfaction (Anderson *et al*., 1994).

Relationship among the Variables:

Employee Commitment and OCB

One of the main outcome of employee commitment is the organisational citizenship behaviour of the employee. Highly committed employees are more engaged in organisational citizenship behaviours which improve their support and value towards the organization. This is because when employees desire to remain in their jobs and identify with the goals of their organizations, they are likely to concentrate on supporting and cooperating to achieve the firm's objectives (Greenfield, *et al*., 2008; Lavelle *et al.,* 2009). Committed employees persuade to do a more extra-role performance that, in turns, leads to engage in pro-social behaviour i.e. OCB. Therefore it is concluded that employee commitment have positive effect on OCB, (Zeinabadi, 2010; Haque *et al*., 2019; Utami *et al.,* 2021). Paul *et al*., (2019) found that affective commitment is positively related to the OCB, higher affective commitment leads to the discretionary behaviour of the employee.

Proposition$_1$: Employee commitment influence the organisational citizenship behaviour.

Employee Commitment → OCB

Employee Empowerment and OCB

Spretizer (1995) said that OCB is the positive outcomes of empowered employee. There is a possibility of performing well by the employees and conforming to organisational citizenship behaviour (Jha, 2014). Employee empowerment augmented the feeling of self-efficacy among the employees which leads to the organisational citizenship behaviour. Authors showed the significant relation of structural empowerment on organisational citizenship behaviour among Canadian Health Professionals, Pakistan Banking Sector Employees, Indian Primary health centre (Gilbert *et al*., 2010; Jaffery & Farooq, 2015; Narzary & Palo, 2020). Singh, & Singh

(2019), Seibert *et al*., (2011) and Chiang & Hsieh (2012) showed positive relation between the psychological empowerment and organisational citizenship behaviour. Turnipseed and VandeWaa, (2020) found that meaning and competence of psychological empowerment are positively related with the organisational citizenship behaviour. The employees who are empowered are positively related to the organisational citizenship behaviour (Pham, & Ah, 2021; Kang *et al*., 2020; Chiang *et al*., 2012; Spreitzer, 1995).

Propostion$_2$: Employee empowerment influence the organisational citizenship behaviour.

Employee Empowerment → OCB

OCB and Perceived Service Quality

Perceived service quality is one of the main criteria in service business that totally depends on interaction of the frontline employees with their customers. Therefore OCB impacts the customer perceived service quality through socialisation process which takes place among the employee and consumers. The individual socialization process within a firm encourages OCB dimensions to become behaviour that aimed to achieve better outcomes for customers (Netemeyer*et al*., 1997).OCB have an immediate effect on customer perception which leads to perceived service quality and OCB also have effect on service quality through internal factor of the organisation i.e. service climate, working environment, team cohesiveness, service process cohesiveness (Castro *et al*., 2004). Therefore it is concluded that OCB have positive effect on perceived service quality (Qiu *et al*., 2019; Fatihudin *et al*., 2020; Ratnayaka *et al*., 2020; Pham & Ahn,2021).

Proposition$_3$: Organisational citizenship behaviour influence the perceived service quality.

OCB → Perceived Service Quality

Perceived Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

In today's competition environment the key to sustainable competitive advantage lies in delivering high quality service that leads to customer satisfaction (Shemwell *et al*., 1998). Service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Anderson & sulivan,

1993; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; oliver, 1993). Selvakumar (2015) stated that service quality is the most important asset for satisfying customers. Sureshchander *et al.,* (2002) found that service quality and customer satisfaction are independent from each other but related with each other implying that increase in one will automatically leads to increase in other. Joudeh & Dandis (2018) investigated the internet service providers and found that customer satisfaction is the mediator between service quality and customer loyalty which means that good and well-built service quality may lead to customer satisfaction which in its turn can lead to a better level of customer loyalty. There were positive and significant relationship between the service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction (khan & Fasih, 2014; Dam & Dam, 2021; Othman *et al*., 2019).

Propostion$_4$: Perceived Service Quality influences the Customer Satisfaction

Perceived Service Quality→ Customer Satisfaction

Employee Commitment and Customer Satisfaction

Commitment of the employees are advantageous to customer satisfaction in two ways firstly employee being committed to the organisation deliver superior quality services to the consumers (Boshoff & Tait, 1996) and secondly committed employees are psychologically pleased with their job and this feeling is automatically transferred to the customers. Lombardi & Cavaliere (2019) illustrate that there is a positive major influence of affective commitment on employees' customer orientation, and knowledge sharing behaviour act as a mediator in this relationship. Committed employees automatically become more fruitful and enthusiastic towards their work and have a positive attitude towards customer when serving them because of their identification with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Therefore it is concluded that employee commitment is positively related with customer satisfaction (Agyeiwaah & Dayour, 2021; Sanni, 2020).

Proposition$_5$: Employee Commitment influences the Customer Satisfaction.

Employee Commitment → Customer Satisfaction

Employee Empowerment and Customer Satisfaction

If an organisation empowered their employee and values their contribution then automatically it reciprocates by being more supportive towards their customers. Empowered employee makes every effort in understanding and observing the needs of the customers and then provides personalized services to them (Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998; Suntornpithug *et al*., 2010). Namasivayam *et al.,* (2014) and Reynolds &Beatty, (1999) emphasised that the employee empowerment is a determinant of customer satisfaction. Empowerment also have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation of employees which leads to involvement and commitment of employees towards their work which results in terms of customer satisfaction by which organisation objective is accomplished. Structural empowerment is positively related with the perceived customer satisfaction through the psychological empowerment and intrinsic motivation Proenca *et al*., (2017); Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1998). Therefore it is concluded that there is a positive relationships between employee empowerment and customer satisfaction (Al-Omari *et al*., 2020; Proenca *et al*., 2017).

Propostion$_6$: Employee Empowerment influences the Customer Satisfaction.

Employee Empowerment → Customer Satisfaction

Research Gap

After reviewing of literature, it has been found that retail stores are still less explored from the employee point of view. During the past years study related to the retail business are mainly engaged in marketing and consumer behaviour perspective rather than on the significance of the human resource which also plays an important role in satisfying the consumers. Very limited studies have been seen with employee commitment, employee empowerment, organisational citizenship behaviour, service quality and customer satisfaction with respect to retail stores which can be explored further. Although researcher have explored these variables individually with different perspective but not in relation with retail stores. Mostly studies have takes place outside India regarding these variables and previous study was based on 4-5 years and it can be done more time period basis. This study conduct a comprehensive research which include various dimensions of employee commitment, employee

empowerment, organisational citizenship behaviour, perceived service quality and customer satisfaction in retail stores in India.

IV. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

There is a vast scope for research and analysis in the retail sector which is growing rapidly, leads to change in the expectations of employees and consumers both. Employees wants authority of decision making and customer wants satisfaction from the services that are provided by the employees. By keeping these things in mind the present study strives to play significant role for the organisation effectiveness that can be enhanced through the employee empowerment, employee commitment and employee organisational citizenship behaviour which leads to the customer satisfaction. This study is also important for customer contact employees to understand how their behaviour directly affects and consequently impacts organisational outcomes such as service quality and customer satisfaction. It also helpful in designing the training programmes for the customer contact employees who have the direct contact with their ultimate customers and also provides guidance to managers in creating proper structure that supports the employee to access and contact with their resources needed to achieve their job goals in retail stores. Mainly it will help the organisation to rethink their practices and procedure towards customer contact employees which play a significant role in satisfying the consumers.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following objectives are framed in order to carry out the proposed study:

1. To study the influence of employee commitment and employee empowerment on employee organisational citizenship behaviour in retail stores.
2. To study the influence of employee organisational citizenship behaviour on perceived service quality in retail stores.
3. To study the influence of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction in retail stores.
4. To study the influence of employee commitment and employee empowerment on customer satisfaction in retail stores.

Hypothesis of the Study

The following alternate hypotheses are formulated after taking into consideration the proposition mentioned in review of literature and the objectives mentioned above:

H_{a1}: Employee commitment influences the employee organisational citizenship behaviour in retail stores.

H_{a2}: Employee empowerment influences the employee organisational citizenship behaviour in retail stores.

Ha_3: Employee organisational citizenship behaviour influences the perceived service quality in retail stores.

Ha_4: Perceived service quality influences the customer satisfaction in retail stores.

H_{a5}: Employee commitment influences the customer satisfaction in retail stores.

Ha_6: Employee empowerment influences the customer satisfaction in retail stores.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is developed to empirically examine the objectives of the study. It includes the systematic procedure for collecting and analyzing data, sampling design, research instruments and tools and construction of the questionnaire, the methods of data collection and statistical tests used for data analysis.

a) Research Design

The design of research would be exploratory cum descriptive in nature and describing relationship among employee commitment, employee empowerment, employee OCB, perceived service quality and customer satisfaction towards retail stores.

b) Type of Data

Primary data would be collected from customer contact employees (Frontline employees) and customers in order to achieve the objective mentioned in the study.

c) Sampling Design –

The following design is intended for obtaining required data to carry out the study:

i. **Sampling Unit:** The sample would consist of two sampling units:

Customer contact Employees: The frontline employees in retail stores who are in direct contact with the customers would form the sampling unit for the study. The employees having atleast a retail experience of 2 years would be included in the study.

Customers: The customers having atleast an age of 25 years and a regular visitor of retail stores would be included in the study.

ii. **Sampling Size:** The samples would consist of customer contact employees and customers. The sample size would be decided on the basis of the results of pilot study. The sample size can be increased according to requirement of the study.

iii. **Sampling Area:** The sample would be drawn from the National Capital Region (NCR) in India as it is seen in literature that retail stores usually operate in urban areas. Hence both the samples would be available in this region.

iv. **Sampling Technique:** Non-probability sampling technique using convenience cum judgemental sampling would be used for the collection of data.

d) **Research Instrument:** Two structured questionnaires would be developed to collect the data from the two sets of samples included in the study. The first questionnaire would seek to collect information from the customer contact employees on employee commitment, employee empowerment and OCB. Second questionnaire would be used to collect information from customers on Perceived Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction.

Questionnaire I: Questionnaire for the employee would have two sections in which section A would include the demographics of employees such as gender, age, educational qualification, total experience and experience within the organisation etc. Section B would include statements relating to the employee commitment, employee empowerment and employee OCB.

Questionnaire II: Questionnaire for the customers would also have two sections in which section A would include the demographics of consumers such as gender, age,

educational qualification, marital status, etc. Section B would include statements related to the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

Statements of the Questionnaire would be extracted from the studies mention in the Table I :

Table I: Source of the variables to be included in the study.

Samples	Variables	Authors
Employees	Employee Commitment	Meyer and Allen (1991)
	Employee Empowerment	Kanter (1993) and Spreitzer (1995)
	OCB	Organ (1990) and Podsakoff (2000)
Customers	Perceived Service Quality	Parasuraman *et.al.* (1988, 1991)
	Customer Satisfaction	Brady *et.al.* (2005) and Cronin *et.al.* (2000)

The responses on the items included in different variables of would be measured using a Likert type scale. A pilot survey would be conducted before finalising the questionnaire. Items analysis would be done to retain the constructs of questionnaire.

e) Statistical Tools

Descriptive statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation would be used. Correlation and regression would be used to demonstrate the direction and degree of relationship between the variables. Moreover, other advanced tools if required as per the requirements EFA, CFA, and PLS-SEM would also be used.

VII. PROPOSED ORGANISATION OF STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter would provide description of the variables taken up in the study. Moreover, a light would be thrown on the concept of retail stores and a dimension of employee commitment, employee empowerment, organisational citizenship behaviour, perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter would include a review of the existing literature related to the variables taken up in the study. It would assess the relationship between the variables of the study as defined by various researchers. It would also identify the research gap existing in the literature thereby justifying the study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The third chapter would highlight the importance of conducting the study. The objectives of the study would be mentioned in this chapter. It would describe the detailed research methodology including the sampling design, research instruments and tools, construction of the questionnaire, the methods of data collection and statistical tests used for data analysis.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation

The fourth chapter would illustrate the analysis of collected data in accordance to the objectives of the study and interpret the results. It would highlight the important relationships among the variables of study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter would include the major findings of the study. Further the discussion of the findings of the study vis-s-vis the finding of the previous studies would also be explained in this chapter. The chapter would end with conclusion, limitation and further research directions.

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